

PRESS RELEASE

Natural Resources Commission and DPW Announce Winter Moth Caterpillar Treatment Program And Educational Symposium on April 2, 2007, 7:30 pm, Town Hall

Spring will soon be here to delight us with warm days, clear nights, perennials peeking out of the ground, grasses starting to display verdant colors, a panoply of multicolored blossoms on shrubs displaying their beautiful arrays and trees bursting forth with delicate leaves to form a peaceful arbor for all of us. Spring will also bring alien visitors that will not be kind to the beauty of Wellesley – Winter Moth Caterpillars.

In the spring of 2005, the University of Mass. Extension Service and the Mass. Department of Conservation and Recreation reported signs of winter moth caterpillar damage to trees in Eastern Massachusetts, including sections of Wellesley. They not only reported noticeable existing damage to trees, but also predicted that the winter moth population would continue to expand causing even more damage. In the spring of 2006, wide-spread winter moth caterpillar damage occurred throughout Wellesley. A large number of young maples, cherry and hawthorn trees planted in 2004 and 2005 were totally defoliated. These trees, many older sugar maples and other similar species were clearly stressed by defoliation and their life expectancy was shortened. Future defoliation of these trees could result in their death.

In response to this infestation, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and the DPW have developed a proactive treatment program to limit the impact of the Winter Moth infestation on public trees and inform Wellesley citizens about methods they can use to protect their own trees.

Protection of Wellesley's public trees has been and will continue to be accomplished by active public tree management. This includes pruning of dead wood, weight reduction, corrective pruning of younger trees, mulching, fertilization and aeration of specific stressed trees, watering of first year plantings or stressed trees. Due to the Winter Moth infestation expected to occur in 2007, the Town will be conducting controlled spraying of highly valued trees found in parks, around public buildings and recently planted trees using the product "Conserve," which meets the Northeast Organic Farming Association standards in compliance with the NRC's Integrated Pest Management Policy. Spraying will start in April and will conclude no later than mid-June. Town trees to be sprayed will be posted with notices 24 hours before and after applications. For more information about the NRC's Integrated Pest Management Policy, go to www.wellesleyma.gov/nrc.

Informational assistance for the protection of privately owned trees is available to citizens from the DPW Parks Division, the Natural Resources Commission, the Umass Extension Website at: www.umassgreeninfo.org (under "Fact Sheets" click on "Insects and Mites"; on the next page click on "Defoliators"; Scroll down the alphabetized list to find several winter moth fact sheets) and at a Winter Moth Educational Symposium jointly sponsored by the NRC, DPW and State of Mass. Forest Health Program.

The Winter Moth Educational Symposium will be held at the Wellesley Town Hall in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at 7:30 PM on Monday, April 2, 2007. This symposium will provide an opportunity for Wellesley citizens to get in-depth information about the Winter Moth infestation directly from forest health specialists. For more information about this symposium, contact NRC Director Janet Bowser at 781-431-1019 ext. 2290, e-mail jbowser@wellesleyma.gov.

